

Facts & Information

August 1999

Filing a Formal Complaint

If you have a complaint about your service, you should first take the issue up with your service provider. If you do not get satisfaction, you can file an *informal* complaint with the UTC by calling toll-free 1-800-562-6150, by using the electronic complaint form available on the agency's website or by sending us a letter with the complaint details. An informal complaint triggers an investigation by UTC staff.

A formal complaint is a more serious step where you charge your utility with violating a state law, a tariff or a UTC order or rule. As the complainant, you must prove your case in a formal proceeding, similar to going to court.

How to file a formal complaint.

By law, formal complaints must be in writing and be clearly and concisely stated. The complaint should include the facts constituting the basis of the complaint, including relevant dates, citations of the specific statutes or UTC rules involved and the relief requested. Your name and address and the name and address of your attorney, if you employ one, must appear upon the complaint.

State law and rules

The legal rules covering formal complaints can be found in RCW 80.04.110 and Chapter 480-09 WAC. Other provisions of law may also be relevant to your complaint. For instance, a complaint regarding pay phone service might cite the state's pay phone rules.

Legal advice

An attorney is not required to file a complaint, however, you may wish to consult legal counsel to ensure you have considered all options available to you. If not represented by an attorney, the complainant must include a statement that the document (pleading) is true and correct to the best of the signer's belief. UTC staff are not allowed to provide legal advice to the public.

Process

The commission must issue a final decision on a complaint within 10 months of it being filed with the UTC. Depending on the type of complaint and evidentiary needs, a hearing may be scheduled. If a complaint is upheld, the UTC's power is limited to fining a regulated company or, if appropriate, ordering a refund of fees paid for services. If you are seeking financial compensation for damages, you would need to consider other legal remedies such as litigation.



P.O. Box 47250
1300 S. Evergreen Park Dr SW
Olympia, WA 98504-7250

Local: (360)664-1160
Toll Free: 800-562-6150
TTY: (360)586-8203

Web site: www.wutc.wa.gov
Email: info@wutc.wa.gov

All UTC publications are
available in alternate formats.
Call (360)664-1133.